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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001096

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR,
JOINT STAFF FOR LTG SELVA

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: GOI SEEKS TO REGISTER NEARLY 35,000 ACRES OF WEST
BANK LAND

Classified By: Deputy Principal Officer Greg Marchese for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

[¶1.](#) (C) The Government of Israel is seeking to register roughly 139,000 dunums (or 35,000 acres) of non-contiguous land in areas of the West Bank south of Route 1 and northeast of Hebron. Much of the land is currently used as military zones or nature reserves. Public advertisements on June 26 give Palestinian owners 45 days to claim legal entitlement to the land or risk their land becoming "abandoned property." The implication is that the land, if not claimed, would become public land held by the GOI. Senior PA officials criticized the move and urged Palestinian landowners to file petitions with the Israeli authorities. End Summary.

Israel seeks to register 35,000 acres

[¶2.](#) (SBU) On June 26, the Israeli Land Registrar's branch office in Maale Adumim published advertisements in local Arabic-language newspapers requesting persons to register ownership claims within 45 days for various, non-contiguous plots of land comprising a total of 139,000 dunums (or nearly 35,000 acres). The lands in question are located in areas south of Route 1 between Maale Adumim and the Dead Sea, and also further south toward Sair village northeast of Hebron. Exact locations of the land were provided through GPS coordinates, leaving many Palestinians confused as to whether their land falls into the identified pots. PA contacts indicated they would seek OCHA's assistance to map the coordinates. If land remains unregistered, it will be considered "abandoned property." The implication is that land that is not claimed would revert to GOI ownership.

Palestinian officials call it a land grab

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Senior Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala'a) criticized the Israeli announcement as "a continuation of the policy of cantons and dissecting the West Bank and preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state." PA Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Hatem Abdel Qadar urged all Palestinian owners and users of the land to lodge petitions with the Israeli land registrar to "block this attempt to declare these lands abandoned."

[¶4.](#) (C) Deputy PA Minister of Religious Affairs Salah Zuhayka told PolOff June 29 that part of the land in question belongs to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and that the Ministry is preparing an objection to the GOI's intention to register the land. Zuhayka said the real issue is not the land registration, but the pattern of Israel's efforts to

legitimate occupation of the West Bank. He opined that no Palestinian effort will be enough to prevent eventual confiscation of the land. Zuhayka called on the international community to insist that Israel respect international law as it relates to land ownership in occupied territory.

WALLES